

What is Claimed is:

1. A method for providing help information for a user in a speech dialog system for operating a background application,

the background application being modeled on principles P1 through P3:

P1) the background application can be interpreted as a finite set of transactions T1, T2, ..., Tn;

P2) each transaction has a finite set of parameters required to execute the transaction;

P3) each parameter has a grammar that serves to acquire a value for the parameter in a speech dialog;

the speech dialog system can assume at least the following states:

state a): no transaction has yet been selected, and the transactions T1, T2, ..., Ti are still possible;

state b): a transaction has been selected, but not all parameter values relating to this transaction have yet been input;

the method comprising:

storing a transaction prompt for each transaction;

storing a help prompt for each parameter;

a global help command to request help ; and

outputting a prompt corresponding to the state and context after detection of the global help command such that

at least one transaction prompt is output in the state a); and

at least one help prompt is output in the state b).

2. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the help prompt stored for each parameter either enumerates all possible values of this parameter or specifies the form in which a value for the parameter is to be input.

3. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein after detection of the global help command in state a)

- either all possible transactions are output to with a global help prompt,
- or, by a question containing a transaction prompt, to be answered with "yes" or "no", the user is asked individually for each available transaction whether he wishes to execute

this transaction .

4. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein  
a global help prompt is stored; and  
after uttering the global help command, a user is provided with possible options for state  
a) by a combination of the global help prompt and the transaction prompt.

5. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein an option prompt is stored and output  
with all values that are possible for a respective parameter.

6. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein a grammar is stored for each possible  
user input.

7. The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the available transactions are  
hierarchically ordered.

8. The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein after detection of the global help  
command in state a)  
- either all possible transactions are output to with a global help prompt,  
- or, by a question containing a transaction prompt, to be answered with "yes" or  
"no", the user is asked individually for each available transaction whether he wishes to execute  
this transaction .

9. The method as claimed in claim 8, wherein  
a global help prompt is stored; and  
after uttering the global help command, a user is provided with possible options for state  
a) by a combination of the global help prompt and the transaction prompt.

10. The method as claimed in claim 9, wherein an option prompt is stored and output  
with all values that are possible for a respective parameter.

11. The method as claimed in claim 10, wherein a grammar is stored for each

possible user input.

12. The method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the available transactions are hierarchically ordered.

13. A system for providing help information for a user in a speech dialog system for operating a background application,

the background application being modeled on principles P1 through P3:

P1) the background application can be interpreted as a finite set of transactions T1, T2, ..., Tn;

P2) each transaction has a finite set of parameters required to execute the transaction;

P3) each parameter has a grammar that serves to detect a value for the parameter in a speech dialog;

the speech dialog system can assume at least the following states:

state a): no transaction has yet been selected, and the transactions T1, T2, ..., Ti are still possible;

state b): a transaction has been selected, but not all parameter values relating to this transaction have yet been input;

the system comprising:

a memory to store a transaction prompt for each transaction and a help prompt for each parameter;

a detection unit to detect a global help command;

an output unit to output a prompt corresponding to the state and context, after detection of the global help command such that

at least one transaction prompt is output in the state a); and

at least one help prompt is output in the state b).

14. A method for providing help information to a user of a voice operated system that executes one of a plurality of transactions after the transaction has been identified and a value for each parameter associated with the transaction has been entered, comprising:

receiving an oral command requesting help;

matching the oral command with a stored global help command;

outputting at least one transaction prompt if the user has not identified the transaction;  
and

outputting at least one parameter help prompt if the user has identified the transaction, but has not entered a value for each parameter associated with the transaction.

15. The method as claimed in claim 14 wherein  
there are numerous possible transactions,  
the possible transactions are separated into groups,  
the user is prompted to select a group of transactions, and  
after the user selects a group of transactions, the user is prompted to select a  
transaction within the group of transaction.